UNITED
NATIONS

CRC

Convention on the
Rights of the Child

Distr.
GENERAL

CRC/C/3/Add.60
14 October 1999

Original : ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION

Initial reports of States parties due in 1992

BHUTAN

(20 April 1999)

GE.99-44690(EXT)

CONTENTS

	Paragraphs	Page
Introduction	1 - 6	4
I. INFORMATION IN RELATION TO THE ARTICLES OF THE CONVENTION	7 - 182	5
A. General measures of implementation	7 - 27	5
B. Definition of the child	28 - 37	10
C. General principles	38 - 54	12
1. Non-discrimination (art. 2)	38 - 41	12
2. Best interests of the child (art. 3)	42 - 44	12
3. The right to life, survival and development (art. 6)	45 - 50	13
4. Respect for the views of the child (art. 12)	51 - 54	14
D. Civil rights and freedoms	55 - 76	15
1. Name and nationality (art. 7)	55 - 58	15
2. Preservation of identity (art. 8)	59	15
3. Freedom of expression (art. 13)	60 - 64	16
4. Access to appropriate information (art. 17)	65 - 68	16
5. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion (art. 14)	69	17
6. Freedom of association and peaceful assembly (art. 15)	70	17
7. Protection of privacy (art. 16)	71 - 72	17
8. The right not to be subjected to torture or other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (art. 37(a))	73 - 76	18
E. Family environment and alternative care	77 - 94	18
1. Parental guidance (art. 5)	99	18
2. Parental responsibilities (art. 18, paras 1-2)	80 - 83	19
3. Separation from parents (art. 9)	84 - 85	19
4. Family reunification (art. 10)	86 - 87	19
5. Recovery of maintenance for the child (art. 27, Para. 4)	88	19
6. Children deprived of a family environment (art. 20)	90	20
7. Adoption (art. 11)	90	20
8. Illicit transfer and non-return (art. 11)	91 - 92	20
9. Abuse and neglect (art. 19), including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (art. 39)	93	20
10. Periodic review of placement (art. 25)	94	20

	Paragraph	Page
F. Basic health and welfare	95 - 133	20
1. Survival and development (art. 6, para. 2)	98 - 112	21
2. Disabled children (art. 23)	113 - 118	24
3. Health and health services (art. 24)	119 - 129	25
4. Social security and child-care services and facilities (arts. 18 and 26)	130 - 131	27
5. Standard of living (art. 27, paras. 1-3)	132 - 133	27
G. Education, leisure and cultural activities	134 - 170	28
1. Education, including conventional training and guidance (art. 28)	138 - 162	29
2. Aims of education (art. 29)	163 - 165	35
3. Leisure, recreation and cultural activities (art. 31)	166 - 170	36
H. Special protection measures	171 - 182	37
1. Children in situations of emergency	171 - 172	37
2. Children in conflict with the law	173 - 176	37
3. Children in situations of exploitation, including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (art. 39)	177 - 179	38
4. Children belonging to a minority or an indigenous group (art. 30)	180 - 182	38
II. CONCLUSION	183 - 185	39

Introduction

1. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was signed and ratified by the Royal Government of Bhutan in May 1990.

2. In Bhutan, family systems have always been strongly maintained. Children are well taken care of by a society which accords them high importance. This, in essence, is the kind of environment into and within which a Bhutanese child is born and reared. The birth of a child, irrespective of its sex, is welcomed. Children born with disabilities and defects are given greater care and attention. The fact that there has never been a felt need for the establishment of children's homes or institutions reflects the strength of the nurturing environment in which children are raised in Bhutan. Most Bhutanese are greatly influenced by their religious beliefs. For them, any joyous or calamitous event is seen to be a direct result of one's actions, be it in this life or in previous lives, and is therefore, viewed in a pragmatic manner and accepted as a part of one's destiny. It is this belief that influences the values of most Bhutanese and urges them to accumulate merit in this life for a better life after rebirth. It is important to understand this precept when looking at the situation of children in Bhutan.

3. The population of Bhutan is estimated at 600,000 according to 1996 figures. With the proportion of children under 15 as high as 43 per cent, children are considered an important target group of all integrated development programmes of the Government. Bhutan currently has a population growth rate of 3.1 per cent which has implications for the development of the country, including the provision by the Government of free social services to the population. The Government aims to reduce the growth rate to 2.48 per cent by 2002 through well coordinated multi-sectoral policies and programmes. Reproductive health education is being undertaken to promote not only the "small family norm" but to ensure that the quality of life is high for those children who are born to families and that the best care and support facilities are provided for the development of the children. Controlled population growth is perceived as essential in order to preserve and protect the abundant natural resources of Bhutan, and this ultimately impacts on and provides benefits to the subsequent generations of children while at the same time maintaining a harmonious balance between humankind and nature.

4. Bhutan allocates over 22 per cent of its development budget to the social sector. Having remained in self-imposed isolation until the early 1960s, planned development in Bhutan began relatively late. The development philosophy adopted by Bhutan, increasingly referred to as Gross National Happiness, emphasises the well-being of individuals over the importance of material gain and is also very relevant to the rights and needs of all children.

5. With the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in pursuance of the declaration adopted by the World Summit for Children in 1990, a National Plan of Action was prepared and incorporated into the development plans including the ongoing Eighth Five-Year Plan for the period 1997-2001. This plan incorporates many of the recommendations and commitments of recent international compacts, including benchmarks adopted at the World Summit for Social Development, the International Conference on Primary Health, the World

Conference on Education on Education for All and the International Conference on Nutrition. Bhutan is fully committed to accomplishing Health for All and Education for All and has set specific targets relating to primary school enrolment, adult literacy, and reductions in infant, child and maternal mortality by promoting access to health services, improved dietary intake and better child care practices. In 1991, the government declared 11th November, the birth anniversary of His Majesty the King, as Children's Day. On this day, special events are held throughout the country on behalf of children in which children participate and express themselves through various activities including drama, sports and cultural events. All these efforts have brought about major progress in child survival and development over the years.

6. By and large, social values contribute to the protection of children's rights in Bhutan. The rights and interests of children are safeguarded by many provisions of different Acts. The relevant Acts and their provisions are discussed later in this report. Following the ratification of the Convention, Bhutan has amended the Marriage Act of 1980 and enacted the Rape Act in 1993 keeping in mind the interests of children and women. In addition, a major step has been taken by drafting a Juvenile Law called the (Draft) Administration of Juvenile Justice Act. This Act protects the rights and safeguards the interests of children and youth and aims at correcting young offenders. This draft will be enacted by the National Assembly of Bhutan.

I. INFORMATION IN RELATION TO THE ARTICLES OF THE CONVENTION

A. General measures of implementation

7. Bhutan was one of the first countries to ratify the Convention. This was done without reservation on any article. In addition, the World Declaration on the Survival Protection and Development of Children adopted by the World Summit and the Plan of Action for its implementation was also signed by His Majesty the King in January 1991. The Royal Government has also accepted in principle all the global goals for children in the 1990s.

8. The goals to be achieved by the Kingdom of Bhutan by the year 2000, as outlined in the National Plan of Action for Children for the 1990s, are also incorporated within the five-year plans of the Kingdom. These objectives have been made widely known to the public through the most popular news medium in the country - the radio. In addition, His Majesty the King, accompanied by government officials, also travels extensively throughout the kingdom discussing the objectives of the plans with the public of the 20 districts. During these visits, His Majesty the King holds free and candid discussions with the schoolchildren.

9. With a view to disseminating information about the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the National Plan of Action for Children for the 1990s, which have been incorporated in the development plans, each District Administration, headed by a Dzongda (District Administrator), briefs the public of the various districts through the Dzongkhag Yargay Tshogchungs (District Development Committees) and Geog Yargay Tshogchungs (Block Development Committees). Such briefings are not seen to be a one-time activity and are in fact conducted on an annual basis.

10. An Information, Education and Communication for Health (IECH) Bureau was established in 1992 to assist in the dissemination of all types of information relating to health and sanitation to the very periphery of the country. The Bureau works very closely with the education sector as children are its primary target group and considered to be "agents of change" to promote positive health education and behaviour practices. Recently, the IECH Bureau launched a programme on organizing health festivals annually with the active participation of schoolchildren who share their knowledge and promote good health practices among the general public. The IECH Bureau has also launched a full-scale campaign on preventive health care in the form of calendars, posters, documentaries, audiovisual aids, sports and cultural events and health messages in the Kuensel weekly newspaper, mainly in support of mother and child care. Many of their materials target schoolchildren who, besides learning, also carry these important messages home to their parents and family. The IECH Bureau staff and Education Division staff form the School Health Committee which addresses the development and nationalization of additional youth-specific information relating to adolescent reproductive health, counselling and information on puberty, and how young people can prepare for adulthood and protect themselves from high-risk behaviours related to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS.

11. Furthermore, in 1996 a Youth Guidance and Counselling Services (YGCS) section was established in the Education Division to promote the development of youth. At the same time, a Youth Centre was initiated in Thimphu to facilitate activities of the YGCS and other organizations dealing with the youth. The Youth Centre provides a venue for the youth to enhance their skills in sports, dramatics, arts and crafts, creative writing, etc. Such centres will be established in other urban areas in the near future.

12. The National Women's Association of Bhutan, the Bhutan Youth Development Association and the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature (RSPN) are active non-government organizations in Bhutan promoting the cause of the child. Lack of other active national NGOs in this field may be attributed to the fact that the stage of economic development in this country is such that the role of the civil society is minimal. However, the Government is fully cognizant of the benefits of such participation and is strengthening partnerships between the Government, national NGOs and international NGOs such as Save the Children (USA), (SNV) Netherlands Development Organization, (JOCV) Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, Voluntary service Overseas (VSO)(UK), Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA)(USA) and the Swiss Association for International Cooperation (HELVETAS). All these organizations are working very closely with the Government and NGOs in Bhutan to enhance the welfare of children.

1. Measures taken to harmonize national law and policy with the provisions of the Convention

13. In order to harmonize national law and policy with the provisions of the Convention, the existing laws of the country are being constantly reviewed. As a result of this exercise, the Rape Act (1993) was enacted by the National Assembly during its 72nd session and the Marriage Act was amended in favour of children during the 74th session in 1996.

14. Recently, Bhutan has been studying the justice system available to juveniles in the country and has prepared a draft Administration of Juvenile Justice Act which seeks to achieve the following:

(a) To establish a uniform legal framework for juvenile justice with adequate provisions for dealing with all aspects of juvenile delinquency in the context of the changing economic, social and cultural conditions prevailing in the country;

(b) To provide for a systematic and specialized approach towards dealing with juvenile delinquency;

(c) To provide for the establishment of institutions required for the care, protection, treatment, development and rehabilitation of delinquent juveniles;

(d) To ensure that society is protected from juvenile crime and that reasonable steps are taken to prevent it;

(e) To constitute special offences in relation to juveniles and provide for punishments;

(f) To ensure that the juvenile justice system is in conformity with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice.

15. The Juvenile Justice Act will extend to the whole of the Kingdom of Bhutan. This law applies to all minors. The Act describes how the police, the courts and the correctional centres must treat juveniles who are charged, arrested or found guilty of an offence punishable under any law in force.

16. In addition, the legal procedures of the country are based on religious principles and value systems which safeguard the interests and the well-being of all children. Social and cultural values also profoundly influence the well-being of a child. At the policy level, the Ministry of Health and Education has identified specific goals relating to children which will be discussed in detail under the relevant articles of the Convention.

2. Existing or planned mechanisms at national or local level for coordinating policies relating to children and for monitoring the implementation of the Convention

17. The Planning Commission is responsible for developing policies and programmes affecting the child in close consultation with other sectors. Information on needs and problems of a particular Dzongkhag (district) is relayed to the Planning Commission through the Dzongkhag and line ministeries. The Ministry of Health and Education is recognized as the focal organization for addressing issues and supporting the status of children in terms of health and empowerment through education. In this regard, it should be noted that continued human resource development in terms of service delivery, capacity-building and sustainability related to service provision and child-focused support programmes have been a government priority consistently throughout its

development plans. Consequently, children remain the focus of Bhutan's development process.

18. Major policy decisions and directives which Bhutan has developed or includes in policy formulation since 1990 with regard to the status of children and women in Bhutan include the following:

The acceptance of all the goals for children in the 1990s;

The formulation of a National Plan of Action for Children;

The ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in September 1990;

Signing of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children adopted by the World Summit for Children in 1990;

Signing of the World Declaration and Plan of Action in January 1991;

Participation in the Southern Asian Association for Regional Development (SAARC) Decade of the Girl Child;

Participation in the SAARC Ministerial Conference on Children held in Islamabad in August 1996 and signing of the resolutions of the Conference;

Signing of the Master Plan of Operations (MOP)1997-2001 established between the UNICEF representative in Bhutan and the Finance Ministry on 31 December 1996. The MOP is based on six major programmes which aim to further improve the survival, development and protection of Bhutanese children. It follows the articles of the Convention very closely in formulating strategies and activities for implementation.

19. All the above instruments have provided the basis for the Government's development plan and various initiatives such as the establishment of community schools to enhance coverage, non-formal education, special education, primary health care, nutrition, etc. have been taken up to meet the development goals.

20. Since 1979, the International Year of the Child, there has been increasing awareness among the Bhutanese, both the general public and policy makers, on the needs of children. In addressing these needs, through actual programme implementation or further policy development, the Government has been assisted by many international agencies both multilaterally and bilaterally. Child participation in helping to define future programmes in health, education, and leisure needs has also been initiated through collaborative efforts of various international NGOs working together with divisions within the Ministry of Health and Education. UNICEF has been assisting the Ministry of Health and Education in monitoring the implementation of many of the articles of the Convention relating to the health and education of the child. In addition, in recognition of the International Year of the Child and the SAARC Decade of the Girl Child, Bhutan Post released new stamps to create greater awareness at the national level for the welfare of Bhutanese children.

21. In 1993, a workshop was organized by the Bhutan Youth Development Association (BYDA) to initiate discussions on the emerging problem of juvenile delinquency in the country. This awareness-raising exercise provided the initial boost to looking at the problem, with preventive and rehabilitation measures being established. More recently, the BYDA has expressed interest in conducting a survey to learn more about emerging problems faced by the youth in Bhutan. The findings of the survey will enable the BYDA to address youth problems and needs more effectively through follow-up support services and preventive programmes. The BYDA is currently in the process of formulating their proposal for the survey. Further, the BYDA has over the past few years initiated the organization of youth development activities. One significant activity organized by the BYDA is the popular annual youth camp that involves children selected from different regions of the country to optimize the multiplier effect of such beneficial programmes.

22. As mentioned before, a Youth Guidance and Counselling section was established in the education sector in 1996 in response to the growing need for more specific actions for the benefit of youth. The section is responsible for exploring the potentials of the youth through school-based activities such as scouting, clubs in various areas like art, music, drama, etc., leadership camps, workshops/seminars for youth and sports. The section is also mandated to introduce and expand career education in schools. Steps in this direction include training of selected teachers in guidance and counselling skills and development of handbooks on career education. In addition, the Technical and Vocational Education Section of the Education Division organizes basic skills training in carpentry, masonry, plumbing, house wiring and hair cutting for youths in and out of school, including juvenile delinquents in prison. For example, in 1997 about10 juveniles received training in plumbing, house wiring and carpentry.

23. At the regional level, through SAARC, numerous initiatives are being taken to address children by realizing programmes agreed upon by the member countries during the numerous conferences and meetings on children. As a member of SAARC, Bhutan is also regularly involved in the conduct of and participation at various workshops on and for the benefit of children in the region. Besides the first and second SAARC conferences on children, more recently, Bhutan participated in the Third SAARC Ministerial Conference on Children of South Asia from 20 to 22 August 1996. The Conference addressed seven themes, namely, child health, the girl child, basic education, child protection, young child nutrition, environment of the child and maternal mortality and women's health. Many strategies adopted at the Conference have been reflected in the Government's eighth development plan, mainly in the health and education sectors.

24. The United Nations radio programme for Asia ("UN calling Asia"), which deals with a broad range of issues including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, is broadcast weekly on the national radio, the Bhutan Broadcasting Service. In addition, programmes for children on education, health and hygiene, moral values, culture, leadership and a host of other related subjects are also broadcast weekly. Since radio is the most effective means of communication with the remote parts of the country it is widely used for dissemination of information in Bhutan.

3. International cooperation

25. Since the Kingdom shed its policy of self-imposed isolation in 1960, interaction with other countries has been increasing. This increased cooperation has contributed to implementation of socio-economic development programmes in Bhutan through external funding. The major donors are the United Nations and its specialized agencies and other bilateral and multilateral agencies.

26. Several international organizations and agencies also work closely with partner divisions of the Royal Government to address children's needs, specifically in the areas of health, education, child development, community-based nutrition, reproductive health, school health and disability.

27. The Royal Government maintains Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York and Geneva and embassies in Bangladesh, India, Thailand and Kuwait, although the ambassadors are also accredited to several other countries. In addition, the Royal Government has honourary consuls in seven other countries in South East Asia, Europe and the United States.

B. Definition of the child

28. A child is legally defined as anyone not having attained the age of 16 in the case of girls and 18 in the case of boys. Some of the articles relevant to the definition of the child in Bhutanese law are given in the following paragraphs.

29. The minimum age for eligibility for marriage is 16 years for women and 18 for men as per section Kha 1-14 of the Marriage Act, 1980. Marriage of children below the age specified above and those persons responsible for arranging such marriages are liable for penalty in accordance with sections Kha 1-11 and Kha 8-20. Registration of marriage is compulsory by law and no marriage registration certificate is issued by the court to anyone who has not attained the age of majority as per section Kha 1-11 and Kha 1-14 of the Marriage Act,1980.

30. The age of majority is 16 years for females and 18 years for males as per section Ka 1-7 of the Land Act. For all purposes, the minimum age is 16 years for females and 18 years for males.

31. As per the prevalent standing regulation, Bhutanese citizens of 15 years and above, if physiologically and psychologically fit, are accepted into the armed forces on a voluntary basis.

32. Child labour in the modern and industrial sectors does not exist in Bhutan. However, children do provide a helping hand in the farms. Having achieved an enrolment ratio of 72%, even this is limited to small chores during school vacations. The Regulation for Wage Rate, Recruitment Agencies and Workmen's Compensation, 1994 prohibits employment of any kind for children.

33. The Notification No. Kha (12-7)/89/5070 dated 26 April 1993 issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs prohibits the sale of alcoholic beverages to children

below 18 years. Measures are being taken by way of administrative directives to prevent such substances being available to the child.

34. The United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988, to which Bhutan is a party, prohibits the cultivation, production, manufacture, possession, sale and purchase, transportation, storage, use, consumption, import/export, etc. of all narcotic and psychotropic substances in Bhutan.

35. In the event of a divorce, separation or death of either parent, Bhutanese law has specific provisions which take care of the child's best interest, such as:

The child has the right to ownership over a definite portion of the parents' properties, depending on the circumstances, as per sections Ga 6-13 and 6-15 of the Inheritance Act;

Responsibility for repayment of debts accumulated by the parents at the time of their separation cannot be transferred to minors, as per section Ngha 4-7 of the Loan Act and sections Ga 6-13 and 6-15 of the Inheritance Act;

Land transactions or financial loan transactions are not considered legal if an individual has not reached the age of 16 in the case of females and 18 years in the case of males, as per section Ka 12-11 of the Land Act and section Ngha 1-12(Ka) of the Loan Act;

Section Kha 7-1 of the Marriage Act entitles children above 9 years of divorced parents the right to choose which parent they wish to reside with, they have the right to visit and receive visits from the other parent. Section Kha 7-2 states, however that children under 9 shall be in the custody of their mother.

36. There are also strict provisions in the law to deal with the rape of children. Penalties include long sentences and heavy fines (Rape Act, 1993).

37. The primary concern of Bhutanese parents has always been the welfare of their children. Children, too, respect their parents. Bhutanese are traditional people. Respect for the religion and culture and respect for parents, teachers and elders are not only taught at home and at school but are also seen in practice. It is these values that have moulded in Bhutan a society which is less familiar with social problems that are prevalent elsewhere in the world. Therefore, since child- related problems were not reported or seen in great numbers, no separate laws for children under a Children's Act have been legislated. However, the laws and Acts which have evolved through different stages have incorporated necessary articles relating to children wherever there was the need to do so.

C. General principles

1. Non-discrimination (art.2)

38. All persons are equal before the law in Bhutan and have equal protection of the law without any discrimination. This prohibits discrimination against any person and child on the basis of race, sex, colour, religion, language, national or social origin, property or birth.

39. The egalitarian nature of Bhutanese society has no place for discriminatory practices. There is no caste system and social and educational opportunities are not affected by rank, birth or sex. Since education is free and administered by the Government except for a few private schools at the primary level, children from all sections of the society study together. Admissions are governed by rules set by the Education division and a committee set up by the dzongkhag education office ensures its proper implementation. In the sparsely populated remote areas of the country, community schools provide education facilities that are within walking distance and easily accessible to young children, specially the girl child. Health services are also free and everyone has equal access to the facilities. The primary health care network reaches out to remote areas and provides services for these disadvantaged children.

40. The Amendment of the Marriage Act of 1980 protects the rights of children born out of wedlock. The National Assembly of Bhutan amended this Act to comply with the Convention. Under section Kha 8-1(2) of the Amendment to the Marriage Act, 1980, children born out of wedlock are entitled to receive a maintenance allowance of 20 per cent of the monthly income of the father until they attain the age of majority.

41. There is no discrimination against girls in Bhutan. In fact, the girl child in Bhutan enjoys the same treatment as the boy child in many aspects of her life. Girls in Bhutan are free to pursue and do pursue career opportunities and further training in any areas desired and while in school, participate in extracurricular activities and sports programmes just as frequently as boys. Even the enrolment of girls at the primary level has improved considerably with the establishment of educational facilities close to their homes. Moreover, the drop-out, repetition and retention rates for girls and boys do not differ.

2. Best interests of the child (art. 3)

42. Children are the focus of all aspects of the national development programme. Education and medical care are provided free by the Government. The global goals that are in the World Declaration and the Plan of Action on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children have been incorporated in the five-year plans of the country since the Seventh Five-Year Plan (1992-1998). A National Plan of Action for Children in the 1990s was formulated in 1991 and has been under active implementation.

43. The health and education sectors work together very closely to ensure that the best interests of the child are considered when framing rules to enhance health and education programmes. For instance, in order to gain admission into a school, the child has to produce his/her immunization card issued at the time

of birth for scrutiny by the Admissions Committee in keeping with resolution 11 of the sixty sixth session of the National Assembly, 1988. This practice has greatly contributed to Bhutan's achievement of universal child immunization.

44. Within the legal framework, some of the important provisions safeguarding the interests of children are mentioned below:

(a) As per resolution 4 of the sixty seventh session of National Assembly, 1988, adoption of children, whether Bhutanese or nonnationals, is permitted provided the cases are processed through the Thrimkhangs (court of law) and appropriate agreements stating that the child would be entitled to full benefits under the Inheritance Act as applicable to natural-born children are undertaken. Children adopted according to these procedures shall be recognized by the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Thrimkhangs as foster children and shall be permitted to be registered in the census as citizens;

(b) Prisoners below 18 years (minor) are kept separately from other prisoners, as per section Chha 4-1(Kha) of the Prison Act, 1982;

(c) Female and male prisoners are kept separately in jail. In case no provision exists, room partitions are to be made for female and male prisoners, as per section Chha 4-1(Ka) of the Prison Act, 1982;

(d) No handcuffs are to be used on a person below 13 years of age, as per section 28 of the Police Act, 1980;

(e) No female prisoners and minors below 18 years are to be fettered or chained, as per section Chha 5-3(Ja) of the Prison Act, 1982; infact, such methods of incarceration have been discontinued since 1993;

(f) Convicted females and minors are not to be given work beyond their capabilities. Further, no persons who have not yet been convicted is permitted to be deployed for daily labour, as per section 16-6 of the Prison Act, 1982;

(g) Section PA-14 of the Thrimzhung Chhenpo (General Law) states that persons below 18 years of age are to be awarded half of the sentences given to adults for criminal offences.

3. The right to life, survival and development (art.6)

45. All children born in Bhutan are provided with every medical facility to ensure their survival and development. In addition, national Safe Motherhood initiatives and guidelines for Bhutan have been developed to support the development and safe delivery of a child even before birth. All pregnant women are encouraged to attend ante-natal clinics during the course of their pregnancy. Checks ensure that the pregnant woman and her unborn child are progressing well. Anaemic women are provided with iron-folate supplements. This is done through the Mother and Child Health (MCH) clinics which are available even in the most remote areas of the country.

46. The nutrition promotion programme established by the Government for mothers and caregivers helps to enhance the health of both mothers and children; knowledge regarding birth spacing also complements the health of both. In view of the effects of iodine deficiency, such as, inter alia, spontaneous abortions, cretinism, pre-term deliveries, etc., in 1985 the existing Iodine Deficiency Disorders Control Programme was strengthened with the establishment of a salt

iodization plant in the country. All salt imported is iodized at this plant. The Government has also banned the sale of uniodized salt and health educators promote the consumption of the country's iodized salt. Similarly, breastfeeding has been encouraged to give a baby the best start in life. While breastfeeding is still widely practised in the country, in order to preempt any negative trend towards bottle feeding, the Government has banned the advertising of breastmilk substitutes, bottles and teats.

47. By resolution 11 of the sixty sixth session of the National Assembly, 1988, all children born in Bhutan must be immunized against the six communicable diseases. Universal child immunization was declared in Bhutan in 1991. Over the years, the high coverage has been maintained with success in 1997 as follows:

Measles	85%
DTP3	87%
OPV	87%
BCG	92%
TT	70%
Hepatitis	84%

48. In order to reach children not covered by the regular immunization programme, National Immunization Days are conducted throughout the country every year. In July 1997, monitoring of acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) was introduced as a step towards achieving a world free of polio by the year 2000.

49. All the medical facilities in the country maintain records of deaths due to diseases caused by non-immunization as well as other causes such as diarrhoea, dysentery and acute respiratory infections (ARI). In 1997, there were 179 reported deaths, 169 due to measles and 10 due to TB, of children below 15 years. There were 74 reported deaths of children below 5 due to diarrhoea and dysentery and 8 due to ARI (Source: Annual Health Bulletin, 1997).

50. Medical termination of pregnancies are only practised in hospitals in cases where danger to a pregnant woman's life is established. Abortion as a family planning method is not practised in the country. There are no societal stigmas associated with out-of-wedlock pregnancies and therefore women are not pressurized to resort to abortion. Religious precepts and philosophies discourage the taking of any form of life.

4. Respect for the views of the child (art.12)

51. Traditionally, children are not involved in family discussions and decision- making. Nowadays, illiterate parents seek the views of their educated children and have confidence in their opinions and suggestions. Children have also become more independent and articulate about their wants and needs.

52. At the school level, teachers are encouraged to respect the views of the children. This is mandated in the existing codes of conduct for teachers and students drawn up and instituted in 1997. In fact, the education system has adopted certain pedagogic systems that enhance the active role of the child in the classroom.

53. Several international agencies working with government division counterparts have begun to explore the use of participatory methodologies for more accurate programme design and development specific to the needs expressed by the children themselves. Topics for such "listening and learning" sessions include reproductive health, education, out of school leisure time activities, and dreams and goals and aspirations for the children's future.

54. In Bhutan, the concept and practice of revering a "Trulku" (reincarnation of a great spiritual teacher), who has related incidents of his previous life at a young age and is thus recognized as a reincarnate, is widely prevalent. This custom provides an indication of the respect that parents have for the views of their child.

D. Civil rights and freedoms

1. Name and nationality (art.7)

55. All children are required to be registered at birth. However, due to the scattered nature of settlements and the fact that almost 85% of the population reside in rural areas, most of the births take place in villages. It is, therefore, the village headman (Gup) and his assistant (Chipon) who register the child as soon as information of the birth is received and verified during the annual census conducted by the Dzongkhag census officer. In urban areas, registration of births is also carried out by the hospitals where they are born. As population statistics are the basis of planned development, the Royal Government insists on timely and accurate registration of births. In the case of children born abroad, the Royal Government's embassy closest to the place of birth is notified.

56. Children are named according to tradition, usually by a religious figure or by the parents. The day, time and date of birth are important aspects taken into consideration when naming a child. It must be noted that the Bhutanese do not have family names, surnames or titles. Children do not automatically take either parent's name; the child, therefore, would have either just one name, or two or more names which may or may not bear an incidental similarity to either parent's names. Children can change their names with the consent of their parents.

57. The Bhutan Citizenship Act, 1985 specifies three types of citizenship: (i) citizenship by birth; (ii) citizenship by registration; and (iii) citizenship by naturalization.

58. In the case of intermarriages, the amendments and resolutions of the sixty seventh session of the National Assembly, 1988, have provisions for granting special residence identity cards to the non-Bhutanese spouses married prior to 10 June 1985. The holders of the special residence identity cards are entitled to freedom of movement, employment, insurance, and medical and educational facilities within the Kingdom and are granted Bhutanese travel documents.

2. Preservation of identity (art.8)

59. Bhutanese children have the right to nationality, name and family as recognized by the citizenship laws of Bhutan. In accordance with resolution 6 of the sixty seventh session of the National Assembly, 1988, Bhutanese nationals, including children who have not been registered in the census record

owing to lack of knowledge or for justifiable reasons, can be included in the census after thorough verification by the concerned authorities.

3. Freedom of expression (art.13)

60. This fundamental freedom can be limited only when necessary in the interest of Bhutan's sovereignty and integrity and national security or in relation to defamation or incitement to an offence.

61. The national newspaper, Kuensel, and the (radio) Bhutan Broadcasting Service organize programmes to promote free expression of the views of children. The BBS has introduced a weekly programme for children on a wide range of subjects and Kuensel has dedicated a column to essays and poems written by children.

62. Most schools in Bhutan publish annual school magazines, financially supported through parental contributions. This activity, which is strongly supported by the Education Division, provides children with a forum to express their views as well as with the opportunity to improve their writing skills . Moreover, schools always encourage children to express themselves and present their own perspectives through drama, debate and essay competitions and through various art forms (poetry, painting, dance, etc.) and cultural activities.

63. Newspapers, periodicals and books are imported freely into Bhutan without any censorship. In order to encourage the acquiring of information and ideas from other countries, many Bhutanese students have been given the opportunity to study abroad through scholarships and fellowships. Every year more than 65 youth go abroad for further studies and long-term training.

64. Bhutan encourages international exchange of cultural information. Recent cultural exchanges have been arranged and organized through many different divisions of the Government including the Special Commission for Cultural Affairs, the Foreign Ministry, the Traditional School of Arts and Crafts, the Bhutan Scouting Programme, the Bhutan Olympic Committee, the Ministry of Health and Education, and international agencies. Such opportunities include student and teacher exchanges, cultural troupe tours, pilgrimages for religious novices, Friendship Clubs, and art and sport competitions at both the regional and international levels. These exchanges provide opportunities for sharing and a fostering of greater understanding between children of various cultures and backgrounds. With the establishment of the National Commission for UNESCO, Bhutanese cultural development has received much focus within and outside Bhutan.

4. Access to appropriate information (art.17)

65. The Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS) broadcasts every day for four hours in four languages, Dzongkha, Schharchop, Nepali and English. The BBS has three programmes every week aimed at children of various ages. Through the SAARC Audio Visual Exchange (SAVE) network, cultural and educational programmes are also broadcast on a monthly basis.

66. Since most of the children live in rural areas where they have very little or no access to reading material, the Education Division has initiated a

reading programme in all schools which covers distribution of a standard set of library books and reference materials to the schools and for the training of teacher librarians. In addition, the Division reaches out to children and teachers in remote areas through a radio programme called "Education calling teachers" once every week which not only serves to strengthen the teaching skills of rural teachers but also provides a forum for students to express and share their opinions together on a variety of school-related issues.

67. Books, periodicals, magazines and comics are available in bookshops even though few are printed in the kingdom. Public libraries also have books suitable for children. Children also have access to various health education/behaviour materials developed by the IECH Bureau. For example, the Primary Eye Care Book, recently developed for primary-school children, provides guidance on how to protect the health of their eyes and the Health is in Our Hands book and "Menstrual health" booklet concern adolescent health issues, while other materials stress the importance of how to protect oneself from STDs and HIV/AIDS.

68. Even though the establishment of a TV network in Bhutan is still in the final stages, the major educational institutions in the country have already been provided with TV sets having access to international TV programmes of benefit to the students to enhance their general knowledge.

5. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion (art. 14)

69. Though Buddhism and Hinduism are the two recognized religions of the kingdom, resolution 16 of the fifty first session of the National Assembly, 1979 resolved that while all other religions could be practised privately no open proselytizing would be allowed with a view to maintaining social harmony.

6. Freedom of association and peaceful assembly (art. 15)

70. Bhutanese children enjoy the freedom of peaceful assembly and have their own national and local associations, especially for environmental, sports and artistic activities. These include the Youth Development Association, Bhutan Scouts, Bhutan Taekwondo Federation, Nature Clubs of the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature, the Bhutan Amateur Athletics Federation and a whole range of Dzongkhag, school and institution-based associations established to promote art and drama, to support environmental concerns and to carry out social service. Children are free to join any of these clubs/associations.

7. Protection of privacy (art. 16)

71. While there are no explicit legal provisions for privacy the requirements of search warrants bears testimony to the fact that the Bhutanese enjoy the right to privacy. The same applies to children.

72. Section Na 1-1 of the Thrimzhung Chhenpo states that no person shall defame or falsely accuse an innocent person. This does not exclude children. Through this statute, an offender who, through words either spoken or written, falsely imputes, in public to a person the commission of murder, armed robbery, a prohibited activity or treason with an intention of harming that person's reputation is liable for penalty.

8. The right not to be subjected to torture or other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (art. 37 (a))

73. As a nation committed to the philosophy of compassion, tolerance, the brotherhood of man and respect for all life, any form of torture is prohibited according to section Ma 1-7 of the Thrimzhung Chhenpo.

74. Although there are no legal provisions specific to corporal punishment in schools, parents may have recourse to the Law and judges have the power to decide cases in accordance with the principles of natural justice. However, the teacher training institutes strongly discourage the use of corporal punishment as a form of discipline within the school environment and are promoting alternative methods for managing children in the classroom.

75. As mentioned elsewhere, the International Committee of the Red Cross conducts regular visits to Bhutan under an agreement to assist the Government in developing and maintaining a prison system that is in keeping with international norms and standards. In the course of its visits, the ICRC has conducted two workshops on its activities for officials of the Royal Government, the judiciary, and officers of the Royal Bhutan Police and Royal Bhutan Army. Apart from regular visits to the Chamgang Central Jail and Thimphu District Jail, the ICRC has also visited jails and detention centres elsewhere in the country.

76. Under section Ba 1-11 of the Thrimzhung Chhenpo, when a crime of homicide is committed by a person below the age of 18 years, the punishment meted out to him/her is half the usual sentence awarded to adults for homicide.

E. Family environment and alternative care

77. The family, in its nuclear and extended forms, is the most important unit in Bhutanese society, as in any other society. Family members are close to each other and support one another emotionally and financially, especially in times of crisis such as sickness, death and other calamities. Most Bhutanese live in the rural areas and even those living in the towns maintain close links with their family homes. Annual rites conducted at "home" are always a time for family members to come together and pray for the well-being of the whole family. This Bhutanese tradition is handed down from parents to children and is very much a living tradition.

78. The strong family ties that exist in Bhutanese society form the basis for providing the love and care children need to grow up into good adults in Bhutan. It is very common to see a child whose parents live and work in a village being brought up by another member of the family living in town, to ensure that the child completes his/her education and gets a good start in life. Furthermore, family members and even friends from the village always have a place to stay in town. This reflects the closeness and familiarity that exists among families and society as a whole in Bhutan.

1. Parental guidance (art. 5)

79. Children in Bhutan live with their parents until they get married and are provided with constant guidance and support.

2. Parental responsibilities (art. 18, paras 1-2)

80. Parents know that it is their inherent duty to feed, clothe, shelter and protect their children as well as ensure development of the child's body and mind. In some rare cases where parents have been irresponsible, it is customary for the grandparents or other relatives to shoulder the responsibilities.

81. The Thrimzhung Chhenpo ensures that both parents, in the event of divorce, have common responsibilities for the upbringing of their child/children. Section Kha 7-3 of the Amendment to the Marriage Act, 1980 provides for the maintenance of the children.

82. The close-knit nature of Bhutanese society ensures that children are not left uncared-for. In the event of the death of both parents, relatives of the parents take on the responsibility of looking after the child.

83. Children from poorer families are given preference in boarding schools which are all fully supported by the Government. Children in non-boarding primary schools in the poorer regions are provided with midday meals by the Government.

3. Separation from parents (art. 9)

84. As mentioned above, Section Kha 7-1 of the Marriage Act entitles children over 9 of divorced parents the right to choose which parent they wish to reside with and the right to visit and receive visits from the other parent.

85. Children separated from parents due to imprisonment of the parent are, by custom, taken care of by the relatives. Children in prison are provided with the opportunity to acquire skills through training.

4. Family reunification (art. 10)

86. The existing visa rule does not have specific provisions for foreigners who have children in Bhutan. However cases which are not covered by the visa rules are normally reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

87. There are no restrictions on any child or his/her parents leaving Bhutan for the purpose of family reunification.

5. Recovery of maintenance for the child (art. 27, Para. 4)

88. Section Kha 7-3-1 of the Amendment to the Marriage Act, 1980 ensures that in the event of divorce both parents have the primary responsibility to provide maintenance for their children until 18. The allowance may be given directly to the spouse or through the court, whichever is convenient to both parties.

6. Children deprived of a family environment (art. 20)

89. Children who are orphans are usually adopted by some member of the family. By resolution 4 of the sixty seventh session of the National Assembly, 1988, any person can adopt a child/children, whether Bhutanese or non Bhutanese, provided the cases are processed through the Thrimkhang and appropriate agreements stating that the child would be entitled to full benefit under the Inheritance Act as applicable to natural-born children are undertaken. In cases where the foster family cannot afford to send the child to school, the Orphans Scheme

initiated and managed by the National Women's Association of Bhutan provides financial assistance. This scheme has so far supported 70 children.

7. Adoption (art. 11)

90. Adoption of Bhutanese children seldom takes place. This is mainly because all children are raised by the immediate family or, in the event of death, by relatives. However, in the event that a family would wish to adopt a child, once the child's adoption has been recognized by the law, the child enjoys an equal right to inheritance in the family in which the child is adopted. The law also ensures that the child is not exploited and there are strict preconditions for adoption. Children adopted according to these procedures are recognized by the law as foster children and are permitted to be registered in the census as citizens.

8. Illicit transfer and non-return (art. 11)

91. No instances of this problem have been reported in Bhutan.

92. Bhutan is a party to the SAARC Regional Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism, 1991. Under Schedule B of the Enabling Act for Suppression of Terrorism, 1991, kidnapping of a person is an offence. In addition, the Extradition Act, 1991, makes kidnapping of a person an extraditable offence.

9. Abuse and neglect (art. 19), including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (art. 39)

93. Child abuse and neglect is a rare phenomenon in Bhutan. Sections Ba 2.6 and 2.7 of the Rape Act contain provisions dealing with the rape of a minor and provide for penalties ranging from 5 to 15 years' imprisonment.

10. Periodic review of placement (art. 25)

94. There have been no reported cases of children being placed by the State with members of the family other than the parents. The extended family takes care of children separated from parents for whatever reason. Thus, as children are adequately protected, there has been no need to put them under the care of special people. There are therefore no laws covering this article. The State does not interfere with family matters unless the cases are brought to court.

F. Basic health and welfare

95. The health and welfare of children are of primary concern to the parents at the family unit level and to the Health Division, which is entrusted with this responsibility by the Government. During the last 30 years, the health situation of Bhutanese children has shown remarkable progress. This is due to the concerted efforts of the Government and the people. Social mobilization and communication have been key inputs for sustaining health and sanitation activities. Effective communication has played a major role in the promotion of immunization. Radio programmes are broadcast to the dispersed population with health education and child care messages. The Health division emphasizes on the importance of parenting education on health issues such as nutrition, sanitation and positive child care practices. Many programmes blend a variety of

information in an integrated manner, such as a nutrition programme which promotes good feeding, good child care and good health service seeking practices; at the same time, it teaches parents and other caregivers about the linkages between good hygiene and health so that they can attend to their children's needs on a variety of levels.

96. The rough and difficult mountain terrain hinders the expansion of an effective primary health care system. However, the Health Division has a well-integrated primary health care service through the establishment of basic health units(BHU) which reach catchment areas of 2,000 to 5,000 people. The BHU is headed by a health assistant supported by an auxiliary nurse midwife (ANM) and a basic health worker (BHW). These three health workers form a multipurpose team which provides primary health care combined with elementary curative services. The team also carries out community health and nutrition education. However, owing to human resource constraints, many units are not fully staffed. The BHUs and hospitals organize "outreach clinics" on a monthly basis. The staff are assisted by volunteer health workers (VHW). There are around 1,000 active VHWs for 5,000 villages. The VHWs not only motivate the community to attend mother and child health (MCH) clinics but also assist the health workers in conducting the clinics as well as promote preventive health within their communities. Through the establishment of a network of 145 BHUs and 454 outreach clinics, Bhutan has been able to achieve over 90 per cent access to basic health services. There are 29 hospitals situated in district capitals that provide back-up and secondary health services.

97. Health indicators are given in the following table:

Indicator	Rate
Total population	600,000*
Annual population growth Rate(%)	3.1**
Crude birth rate per 1,000 population	39.9
Crude death rate per 1,000 population	9.0
Infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births	70.7
Maternal mortality rate per 1,000 live births	3.8
Under-5 mortality rate per 1,000	96.9
General fertility rate per 1,000 women 15-49 years	172.7
Total fertility rate per woman of 15-49 years	5.6
Sex ratio (males per 100 females)	105.2
Dependency ratio (%)	91.7
Antenatal clinic attendance (%)	51.4
Average number of antenatal clinic visits (%)	2.3
Deleveries attended by trained personnels (%)	15.1
Contraceptive prevalence rate (%)	18.8
Life expectancy at birth	66

Source: National Health Survey, 1994

* Central statistical Organisation, Planning Ministry, 1990
** the growth rate till 1993 was 2.6%

1. Survival and development (art. 6, para. 2)

98. In the health and nutrition sector in Bhutan, many programmes are being implemented by the Health Division, both independently and in collaboration with international agencies and organizations, which are geared entirely towards

ensuring the survival and development of children in the kingdom. These are, the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI), the Maternal and Child Health and Family Planning Programme (MCH/FP) or Reproductive Health Programme, the Control of Diarrhoeal Diseases (CDD) Programme, the Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI) Programme, the Nutrition Programme and the Comprehensive School Health Programme.

99. The EPI in Bhutan has been one of the most successful programmes in the country. In 1988, the sixty sixth session of the National Assembly resolved and directed the health sector to immunize all children and pregnant mothers. The declaration of universal child immunization (UCI) in 1991 has confirmed Bhutan's commitment to eradicating all vaccine-preventable diseases in general, and polio in particular, by the year 2000.

100. As a result of special efforts made during 1989/90, in 1991 84% of all infants were vaccinated against the six vaccine-preventable diseases. The percentage of pregnant women immunized with two doses of tetanus toxoid was 63%. The impact of the immunization programme is visible in the dramatic decline in children suffering from measles: from several thousand cases every year before 1988, there were just 169 in 1997. There have been no reported cases of poliomyelitis since 1986. In addition, Bhutan has been able to sustain a high coverage of full immunization. In 1996 immunization against hepatitis B was introduced as an extension of EPI services to Bhutanese children.

101. Although children are the main beneficiaries of all EPI activities, pregnant mothers are also targeted as a part of this programme. Ninety per cent of deliveries take place at home, most often under unhygienic conditions. Timely referral to a health facility providing essential obstetric services is further hampered by poor transportation and communication infrastructure. To address the problem the Health Division has developed and distributed "safe delivery kits" nationwide. The distribution of the kits for home use by rural villagers is accompanied by training of staff at the peripheral and central levels to ensure their correct use. Routine reporting indicates that no neonatal deaths have occurred in the recent past.

102. One of the most important aspects of EPI is the provision of viable vaccines on a regular basis to all health centres throughout the country. The EPI cold chain mechanism is, therefore, given top priority. With the support of UNICEF, cold chain equipment is procured and technicians are trained in its maintenance.

103. The MCH/FP programme, now referred to as the Reproductive Health Programme, is fully integrated into the general health services and delivered through all the health facilities in the country. One of the objectives of this programme is to reduce maternal mortality. It aims to enhance information, education and communication on the dangers of pregnancy, as well as childbirth and post-natal care. In addressing the needs of adolescents, the Ministry of Health and Education is using the Scouting programme as a channel to enhance awareness of STD and HIV/AIDS prevention and condom use and prevention of drug abuse. Other forums such as the Health Festival also provide the youth with a lot of information in this area as well as on other health issues.

104. As a rapidly increasing population will put undue strain on social services, employment opportunities, land holdings and the quality of life as a whole, family planning and related programmes are being intensified to reduce the growth rate from its current level of 3.1%. MCH/FP activities are being intensified within the context of reproductive health. This programme is directed towards strengthening health facilities and services so that men and women have access to safe, effective and acceptable methods of family planning and other methods of regulating fertility. It also aims to enable women to go safely through pregnancy and childbirth as well as have a healthy infant.

105. The CDD/ARI programmes aim to reduce child deaths due to diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections, the two leading contributors to high morbidity and mortality among children. According to the nationwide household case management survey of diarrhoeal diseases, the annual diarrhoea incidence in children under 5 years was 3.93 episodes per child per year. The National Control of Diarrhoeal Diseases Programme(NCDDP) started in 1984 consists of training all categories of health workers; establishment of a diarrhoea training unit in the national referral hospital and of oral rehydration therapy corners in all the other hospitals and basic health units; planning and implementing information, education and communication activities directed at the community; provision of ORS packets in all health facilities and popularisation of oral rehydration therapy. There are no clear data on ARI-related deaths but the number is believed to be significant and under-reported. The ARI control programme will heighten community and health staff awareness of ARI and train staff to deal with it quickly and effectively.

106. In addition to the above child survival interventions, the Government is paying special attention to problems relating to malnutrition which is prevalent in Bhutan. In 1988, the sixty seventh session of the National Assembly passed a resolution on nutrition "to improve the nutritional status of the population with particular reference to the most vulnerable segments of pregnant women, lactating mothers and young children". In this direction, many community-based nutrition programmes have been designed and implemented, both independently and in collaboration with partner INGOs. Nutrition problems of children are currently being addressed through a multi-pronged approach which includes promotion of kitchen and school gardens, use of community nutrition facilitators/focal points and volunteer health workers to promote positive feeding practices within rural communities, and other strategies developed to address specifically the constraints and problems of malnutrition in Bhutan.

107. In Bhutan, micronutrient deficiencies of iodine, vitamin A and iron/folate are common. Iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) have been significantly reduced through the commercial distribution of iodized salt to the population and through efforts under the Iodine Deficiencies Disorder Control Programme. A nationwide study on IDD conducted in 1996 found that the goitre prevalence rate was only 14%.

108. To control vitamin A deficiency, supplements are given to all children below the age of 3 while lactating mothers are given high potency vitamin A within two months of delivery.

109. Iron deficiency anaemia(IDA) among women and schoolchildren is reported to be the most prevalent micronutrient deficiency in Bhutan. Universal iron/folate supplementation will be the medium-term strategy for IDA prevention and control. Primary health workers are involved in widening the distribution of supplements to all girls and women of reproductive age. Nutrition education approaches

include the promotion of increased iron intake and improved iron bio-availability through better dietary practices.

110. As in most countries, AIDS is a threat in Bhutan and although there are only eight registered cases in the country(Annual Health Bulletin,1997), the Government realizes the importance of educating the people about the disease. The Health Division has been successful in disseminating information on AIDS and health and sanitation in general, across the length and breadth of the country through aggressive campaigns conducted by the IECH Bureau. Scout clubs play a vital role in carrying out HIV/AIDS education within and around the schools.

111. The Health Division has also framed a breastfeeding policy to protect the right of women to breastfeed their children, since this provides the ideal nutrition for infants and contributes to their healthy growth and development. All the hospitals in Bhutan are baby friendly and health staff are being trained to reinforce compliance with steps to successful breastfeeding. In addition, working mothers are entitled to three months maternity leave with pay to encourage early child care and breastfeeding.

112. In Bhutan, there have been no reports of infanticide since there are no social problems associated with gender, caste and religion nor social stigmas attached to children born out of wedlock.

2. Disabled children (art. 23)

113. In Bhutan, information on disabled persons is still scarce. However, the Health Division has in recent years been collating data on disabled persons on a country-wide basis. These statistics show that blindness, deaf-mutism and physical disabilities (as a result of diseases such as TB and leprosy) are the major types of disabilities found in the kingdom.

114. Bhutanese people care for and protect children with disabilities, perhaps even more so than those who are able-bodied. Centralized services for the physically disabled are available both at the Gidakom Leprosy Hospital and through the Physiotherapy Department of the Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital where children from throughout Bhutan are referred for treatment and care. A recent addition to the referral hospital's child-focused services includes an adapted outdoor playground for disabled children and those with special needs in the community as well as for those in the hospital for treatment. A new children's physiotherapy unit has been established for both in-and out-patient treatment and a small low-cost adaptive equipment workshop has also recently been put in place. Although based in Thimphu, these facilities will serve as a training centre for health care staff and family members involved in the care and further development of disabled children. The upcoming CBR programme will also take advantage of these facilities by learning, using equipment and developing skills in the nation's capital before taking skills on to more distant and remote districts throughout Bhutan.

115. Furthermore, the school for the visually handicapped in Khaling has been upgraded to the National Institute for the Disabled (NID). To begin with, efforts are under way to strengthen the capabilities of the staff working in the NID through training in specialized areas. Meanwhile, the facilities at the NID

are being enhanced to meet the needs of the students. In particular, the music curriculum of the Institute will be promoted and other areas of the curriculum revised, to include vocational skills. The children there will also receive career guidance and counselling. The opportunity for them to undertake work outside will be explored and encouraged. At present there are 28 children enrolled at the Institute, of whom 10 are girls.

116. In the past, families have protected and brought up their disabled children at home giving them the same love and support that they give to any of their other children. Nowadays, many disabled children themselves, with encouragement from their parents, prefer to go to school and become self-reliant. For those who prefer to keep their children at home, the CBR programme will provide additional support.

117. Disabled children do not enrol in regular schools in view of the lack of special education facilities and teachers. They are encouraged to enrol at the NID where there is room for more children and which has specialized facilities. The students are, however, encouraged to take the examinations at the end of class X, also conducted for children from the regular schools. Successful candidates are admitted into institutions of higher learning where support materials and learning aids are provided to them by the Government. At present, there are two visually handicapped youths admitted to the National Institute of Education for teacher training and Sherubtse College for higher studies.

118. While Bhutan's efforts at rehabilitation are increasing, the Government is taking every possible measure to prevent the numbers of disabled persons from rising. To this end, the Health Division provides immunization against polio, among other diseases, and vitamin A capsules are also provided prophylactically to schoolchildren in addition to treatment of diagnosed cases. The Government also has a very successful iodine deficiency disorders control programme which helps to prevent cretinism and mental retardation. Health workers are also trained to recognize disabilities at an early stage and to try and remedy them.

3. Health and health services (art. 24)

119. Health services are provided free to everyone in Bhutan. Bhutan has adopted the social goal of "Health for All" by 2000 and is also a signatory to the Almaty Declaration.

120. Ever since planned development was initiated in the early 1960s, Bhutan has made remarkable progress in improving the health situation of Bhutanese children and women. Infant and child mortality rates have declined dramatically from 103 and 158 to 71 and 97 respectively between 1984 and 1994. One of the most important factors contributing to the reduction of child mortality has been the high coverage of child immunization. As mentioned earlier, programmes to control diarrhoeal diseases and acute respiratory infections and interventions to address malnutrition have also contributed to the reduction in child mortality.

121. Maternal mortality decreased by half between 1984 and 1994. Since most of the problems are due to lack of information and knowledge about reproductive health and fertility control, one of the strategies adopted by the Health Division, in close cooperation with international organizations like UNICEF and UNFPA, is to increase awareness and strengthen community involvement in all preventive aspects of maternal and child health management. Education materials

addressing CDD, ARI, EPI, safe motherhood and reproductive health are being produced by the Health Division and widely distributed.

122. The efforts of the Government to achieve health for all are constrained by the extremely difficult terrain of the country and, to some extent, by the predominantly rural nature of the population. However, the Government of Bhutan has developed a health delivery system which is responsive to the health needs of the people and which would form an optimal media through which the health development process can take place.

123. The Health Division provides its services from its centres at four levels - peripheral, district, regional and national. The district, regional and national hospitals provide life-saving emergency services along with preventive, promotive and curative services. They also provide referrals to each succeedingly higher level of hospital. For those cases where medical treatment is unavailable in the country, referrals are also made to medical centres outside the country. Costs incurred are borne by the Government.

124. At the peripheral level, the basic health units (BHUs) are the main link between the rural population and hospitals. They also maintain peripheral health posts and outreach clinics. Within this primary health care network that is already in place, a cadre of village health workers has been identified and trained by the Health Division to ensure the availability of basic health services in all villages that are more than two hours' walking distance to the nearest health centre.

125. Community health units have also been established in some hospitals and will be extended to all district hospitals and regional referral hospitals. These units function as "hospitals without walls" to deliver promotive and preventive health services to the population around hospitals.

126. Although an extensive primary health care network has been developed, the services need to improve in the very remote areas. The effectiveness of the network is constrained by geographic circumstances, shortage of human resources, and the fact that the outreach clinics take place once a month. The village health workers are being trained and equipped to provide help at the community level until better health care reaches the patients.

127. In addition, a lot of resources are being spent on educating the public and schoolchildren on health and hygiene. Reproductive health themes have been infused into the school curriculum within relevant subject areas.

128. Safe water supply is an important component of primary health care. There has been notable progress in water supply and sanitation for the population, with the use of piped water reaching 61% and household latrine coverage increasing to 78%. Despite these gains, diarrhoea, worms, and skin and eye infections still account for 60% of rural child morbidity. Hence, the Government of Bhutan has set up a multisectoral programme steering committee for the rural water and sanitation programme. Recently, the Public Health Engineering (PHE) unit that was attached to the Public Works Division was brought under the administrative purview of the Health Division. With this development, the integration between water and sanitation and health has been further strengthened.

129. In Bhutan, health care is closely linked to religious beliefs. Buddhism plays a dominant and guiding role in the daily life of the majority of the population. There are over 10,000 monks around the country. In addition to these ordained monks, there are a large number of lay monks. These various institutions and monks, combined with people's faith and traditions, play a dominant role in shaping the life and health of the Bhutanese people. Hence, the Health Division has involved religious practitioners to promote modern health care. In addition, training religious practitioners in basic health information and sanitation facilities is being provided to monastic institutions to improve the quality of life of the monks.

4. Social security and child-care services and facilities (arts. 18 and 26)

130. Bhutanese families provide the most secure environments in which children grow. The fact that there are no orphanages or other related institutions nor a demand for such facilities in Bhutan is indicative of the strong family support system that exists in the country. Till date, no Bhutanese baby has been reported to be found abandoned. Orphans are looked after by the immediate relatives of the parents or by the grandparents.

131. In Bhutan, only one child care centre has been established in Thimphu. Traditionally, children of working parents are looked after by the grandparents or by close relatives. Although the Government has encouraged establishment of child care centres, such services have not been felt to be necessary by parents owing to the existing strong family support system.

5. Standard of living (art. 27, paras. 1-3)

132. Bhutanese society is, by and large, agrarian, practising mainly subsistence agriculture: 85 per cent of the population derive a living from agriculture and other traditional activities in the rural sector. Most of them work on self-owned landholdings which permit a high degree of self-sufficiency. Employment in the modern sectors of the economy is limited, apart from public services of various kinds, and small-scale trade in the urban areas. Industrial development is limited and does not provide significant employment. Bhutan does not have an unemployment problem at present. In any case, plans and strategies are being formulated to meet the needs of those youth who will be entering the workforce in Bhutan so that proper employment opportunities are available and to ensure that those skilled workers employed are matched correctly to existing skill levels. Additionally, the Technical Vocational Education Section (TVES) provides skill-building and training for out-of-school youth and those currently unemployed in both urban and rural settings through vocational and life skill development. This ensures that employment opportunities are provided to meet the needs of the young and to assist in reducing out-migration from rural areas.

133. The Government ensures that a favourable environment is in place for the all-round development of children. With free health and education facilities established in almost all parts of the country, all children, whether rich or poor, have access to these services. Water and sanitation facilities are also constructed by the Government with community support. With much of the development activities directed at improving the quality of life in the rural areas where the bulk of the population live, the standard of living in Bhutan in general is fairly high. Bhutan does not have the problem of children begging on the streets. There is no abject poverty in Bhutan.

G. Education, leisure and cultural activities

134. Modern education in Bhutan started in 1961 with the commencement of the First Five-Year Plan. Until then, monastic education was almost the only form of formal education available in the country. After the First Five-Year Plan, the Royal Government invested heavily in the education sector and within a period of 30 years has created a modern education system from primary to tertiary levels. Enrolment at all levels has grown at an impressive rate over the years as a result of the Government's commitment to education. The number of children enrolled in primary education has been increasing at an average of 9 per cent each year with an average annual increase of 10 per cent for girls. The primary enrolment ratio as of now is estimated to be 72%. At present, there are a total number of 92,267 students enrolled in the 312 schools and institutions of the kingdom.

135. Bhutan has adopted the goal of universal primary education by the year 2000 after participating in the World Conference on education for all in 1990. Bhutan made its commitment to the Education For All targets in terms of gross enrolment rate since it was unrealistic to set net enrolment targets with many over-aged children out of school. The target for the Eighth Plan is to increase primary enrolment by 5.4 per cent each year, with an annual 6.7 per cent increase for girls and 4.3 per cent for boys. The target of universal access to primary education, however, has been revised to a more realistic target of at least 90 per cent gross enrolment by the year 2002.

136. Key indicators in the education sector are given below:

Estimated gross enrolment rate	72% (boys: 82%, girls: 62%
Drop-out rate	4% (same for boys and girls)
Repetition rate	16% (same for boys and girls)
Estimated adult literacy rate	54%

Source: Planning Section, Education Division, May 1998.

137. The following table shows the male and female enrolment rates and the number of teachers and other staff in the country's schools:

SUMMARY OF ENROLMENT AND STAFF IN SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTES, BY DZONGKHAG, April 1997.

Dzongkhag	Sections	Enrolment			Teachers			Other Staff		
		Boys	Girls	Total	National	Non-national	Total	National	Non-national	Total
BUMTHANG	79	1511	1414	2925	59	10	69	.14	0	14
CHHUKHA	222	4665	3579	8244	228	58	286	62	11	73
DAGANA	48	977	845	1822	30	4	34	11	0	11
GASA	13	246	179	425	8	0	8	3	0	3
HA	74	1420	1292	2712	64	10	74	18	0	18
LHUENTSE	87	1556	945	2501	70	3	73	16	0	16
MONGAR	192	3514	2505	6019	129	31	160	46	0	46
PARO	155	3384	3200	6584	176	22	198	44	3	47
PEMAGATSHEL	104	2061	1415	3476	66	13	79	16	0	16
PUNAKHA	106	2041	1641	3682	80	29	109	28	0	28
S/JONGKHAR	177	4153	2484	6637	149	78	227	43	12	55
SAMTSE	75	1824	1445	3269	100	23	123	29	7	36
SARPANG	76	1616	1424	3040	56	11	67	7	0	7
THIMPHU	371	7976	7784	15760	397	80	477	62	8	70
TRASHIGANG	314	6210	4027	10237	263	82	345	106	10	116
YANGTSE	102	1760	1132	2892	68	10	78	18	0	18
TRONGSA	60	1086	1098	2184	52	7	59	18	0	18
TSIRANG	30	671	491	1162	21	2	23	3	0	3
W/PHODRANG	124	2418	2156	4574	81	21	102	19	0	19
ZHEMGANG	131	2579	1543	4122	102	22	124	48	0	48
Total	2540	51668	40599	92267	2199	516	2715	611	51	662

Source: General Statistics, Education Division, 1997

1. Education, including conventional training and guidance (art. 28)

138. Education, including technical and vocational education, is provided free of cost up to the tertiary level for all children. Every child has the right to enrol in a school after attaining the age of 6. The Government provides free tuition, textbooks, stationery, midday meals and boarding facilities where required. This policy stems from the Royal Government's belief in the importance of education for national development. The Royal Government of Bhutan is further convinced that education is a prerequisite for improving the quality of life of its people at large. Although primary education has not been made compulsory since universal access has not been achieved as yet, the Government has allocated resources progressively to the education sector. Educational facilities are being established to the maximum extent of available resources.

139. The present educational structure consists of one year of pre-primary (PP), six years of primary(I-VI), four years of secondary (two years of junior high(VII-VIII) and two years of high(IX-X), two years of senior secondary

school(XI-XII) and three-year undergraduate programme. The Government has adopted the basic education level at class VIII. The policy in this regard is to assist every child to study up to class VIII. Access from one level to the next is based purely on merit determined by the national and external examinations, and at higher levels, by national human resource considerations. The structure has also been diversified to some extent by provision of technical and vocational education and training facilities. School leavers at class VI gain entry to trade-level education and training and those from classes VIII and X to craft and technician level courses, respectively.

140. Except for seven private schools at the nursery and lower primary levels, all the schools are run by the Government under the administration of the Education Division in the Ministry of Health and Education. The Education Division is responsible for policy planning, programming and implementation of all the educational programmes in the country, with the exception of some technical training. While it directly administers higher, technical and teacher training programmes, financial and administrative responsibilities for the primary and secondary schools are now excercised by the respective Dzongkhag administrations. However, curriculum, inspection, certification and initial teacher recruitment are within the direct purview of the Education Division.

141. There are 257 primary schools and 7 private primary schools providing primary education in the country. Besides, 24 of the 25 junior high schools have primary sections attached to them. In all, there are 74,666 students enrolled at the primary level (PP-VI), of whom 33,321 (44.6%) are girls), (April 1997 statistics).

142. Primary education is directed to providing basic literacy and numeracy skills as well as knowledge of the country's history, geography, values and traditions. The curriculum is most relevant to the needs of Bhutanese children and is provided within the framework of activity based learning. Functional skills such as fundamentals of agriculture, environment, health and hygiene and population education have been infused into the curriculum. Of late, moral science and value education are also being given special attention within the educational process.

143. Progression from the final year of primary education to the first year of secondary education is determined by the student's performance in the Primary School Certificate Examinations (PSCE) at class VI. The purpose of this examination is to monitor the quality of education and is assessed through a 50/50 weighting on internal performance during the school year and the examinations conducted by the Bhutan Board of Examinations at the end of the year. Most of the children who do not pass repeat while some join training programmes and others go back to farming. Similar examinations are conducted at the junior high (class VIII) and high school (class X) levels. There are 25 junior high schools and 13 high schools, four of which provide education for classes XI and XII.

144. In the past, most of the efforts in curriculum development have been at the primary level. Rigorous efforts are now being put into development of the history, geography and economics curriculum at the secondary level. These efforts have been geared towards gradually localizing the external examinations in these subject areas; this has been achieved. In March 1996, the first joint

examinations of the Bhutan Board of Examinations and the Council for Indian School Certificate Examinations were conducted successfully. Since then, the curriculum is more relevant and responsive to the needs of Bhutanese children at the secondary level.

145. Higher education facilities are provided in Sherubtse College, in Kanglung, Trashigang Dzongkhag, which offers degree courses for Bachelor of Science, Arts (Honours) and Commerce (Honours), and at the National Institute of Education in Samtse for Post-Graduate Certificate in Education and B.Ed. Enrolment in these tertiary institutions is based on merit and the admissions criteria are followed very strictly. Children who have not qualified for admission either repeat the last exams to improve their grades or enrol in technical and vocational institutes where training programmes are provided free and every eligible person has the right to seek admission at any of these institutions.

146. Technical and vocational education and training are provided through a number of institutes established around the country. Besides the National Institute of Education (NIE),the Teacher Training College (TTC) in Paro provides primary teacher training programmes in general subjects and the Dzongkha language. The capacity of the Institute is expected to increase from about 200 to 560 trainees within a few years to meet the acute shortage of teachers in the country. The Royal Bhutan Polytechnic (RBP) in Deothang and the Royal Technical Institute (RTI) in Phuntsholing provide three-year diploma courses in electrical, civil and mechanical engineering and four-year certificate courses in motor mechanics, general mechanics, electricity, building construction and draughting respectively. The RTI also provides a one-year trade level course in plumbing, house-wiring and carpentry. The Natural Resources Training Institute in Lobesa offers three -year diploma courses in agriculture, animal husbandry and forestry. Training of forest guards is undertaken at the Bhutan Forestry Institute at Taba which offers a one-year certificate-level course. Training in the health sciences is offered at the Royal Institute of Health Sciences, the National Institute of Family Health and the National Institute for Traditional Medicine. The Royal Institute of Management, established in 1986 in Thimphu, provides diploma and certificate-level courses in various aspects of financial and general management as well as Bhutanese law.

147. In addition to technical and vocational education, the Government has established institutes to cater to children interested in areas relating to culture and tradition. The Institute for Language and Cultural Studies offers first degree- level courses in Buddhist theology, arts and crafts and Dzongkha language. Admission is granted to students who have completed class X successfully. During the Eighth Plan, the Institute will be relocated and developed to provide better facilities and a diversified curriculum. The Trashiyangtse Rigney School was opened on 2 June 1997. Presently, the curriculum followed in this Institute has been developed on a pilot basis to cater to out-of-school youth and adults who have the necessary skills and talent in the different forms of art. The school will enhance their skills and equip them to generate their own income after the course. During the Eighth Plan, facilities for the school will be constructed based on the needs as identified during this pilot period. The Royal Academy of Performing Arts and the School of Arts and Crafts in Thimphu provide training for children and youth interested in these fields and who may not have succeeded in the general school system.

148. To address the needs of disabled children, the National Institute for the Disabled (NID)provides education for the visually disabled as well as coordinates educational programmes for other forms of disabilities. The NID will work towards providing special skills to these disabled children which would help them to become gainfully employed.

149. Sanskrit Patshalas, which provide Sanskrit education at the primary level, have also been established to cater to the needs of the southern Bhutanese people. At present there are two Patshalas, in Surey and Dhoban, with a total of 87 students.

150. The non-formal education (NFE) programme provides functional literacy skills to out-of school youth and adults. This programme started during the Seventh Plan in keeping with Bhutan's commitment to education for all goals. So far 4,080 people (7,090 women) have benefited from the programme. It is gaining in popularity and owing to the increasing demand, an NFE unit was established and strengthened to give full attention to the programme and its further development.

151. While efforts to expand education continue, the Education Division faces a number of challenges. These are described below.

(a) Access to education

152. Recent improvements in medical facilities and the general improvement in the health and living conditions of the people have resulted in reduction of infant and child mortality rates. This has greatly increased the number of children seeking admission to schools. In addition, the growing awareness amongst the populace of the value of education has resulted in tremendous pressure on the limited resources. The challenge ahead is to maintain the quality of education while increasing accessibility especially in the remote areas.

153. The mountainous terrain, scattered nature of settlements and limited communication links constitute formidable barriers to access to primary education. To remove disparities in enrolment and improve access to education, especially to the remote and the disadvantaged areas, the concept of extended classrooms (ECRs) was first conceived during the sixth Five-Year Plan. The concept was based on the one teacher-one classroom school system. The ECRs were placed under a parent school for both administrative and academic supervision. Studies carried out with the help of UNICEF and Swiss Development Cooperation established that ECRs were educationally sound provided there were enough national teachers with the necessary training and the professional commitment to be posted in remote areas. However, to enhance the participation of the concerned communities, such schools were later redesignated as "community schools". The community schools now function as independent entities under the Dzongkhags with the Dzongkhag Education Officers (DEOs), Dzongkhag Resource Teachers (DRTs) and the Inspectorate being responsible for both academic and administrative supervision.

154. There are 107 such community primary schools having an enrolment of 10,743 students, of whom 4,606 (42.9%) are girls. While the communities have demonstrated their willingness and capability to establish such schools, the

more important task ahead is to ensure that the quality of education in these schools is comparable to the education provided by regular primary schools. Several strategies have been planned and implemented to address this issue. Trained teachers are posted in these schools and they are provided with a number of incentives such as training, promotion and other allowances. Multi-grade teaching is practised in many of these schools which have enrolments of 30 or less. The teachers are sent to Australia and Canada for training in multi-grade teaching practices and management. Community schools, as a target group, are being provided with teaching/learning support materials through UNICEF.

155. While community schools can improve the accessibility to lower primary education, it will also create pressures on the existing system, particularly teachers and classrooms, at the higher primary level. The two teacher training institutes in the country are already being expanded to meet the demand for additional teachers. Community schools at the primary as well as secondary level are being built, consolidated and upgraded to accommodate the upper primary classes as well as to facilitate better coverage of specific population groups where even the establishment of community schools is not viable. Moreover, it will enable girls to continue their studies if parents do not want to send their daughters to boarding schools.

(b) Repetition and Drop-out

156. The drop-out rate is estimated at 5% annually for every class and the repetition rate at 13%. The Education Division has made conscious efforts to reduce these problems as they increase the cost of education, contributing to the inefficiency of the system. The factors encouraging drop-outs and repetition are both in-house and socio-economic in nature. Establishment of schools closer to the homes of the children, enhancement of the learning environment, curriculum and teaching methodology, and provision of day meals through WFP are some of the strategies that have been adopted to reduce drop-out and repetition rates.

157. The Education Division has also implemented a number of measures to alleviate these problems. For example, children in rural areas do not have to wear uniforms since many cannot afford them. In addition, in general, mid-term vacations have been lengthened to coincide with planting/harvesting seasons and school management boards have been set up to enhance parent-teacher communication and cooperation. Moreover, the environment in schools is expected to improve with the recent introduction of a code of Conduct for students and a code of conduct and ethics for teachers.

(c) Teacher shortage

158. The education system has continued to suffer from teacher shortages. The shortage has been filled partially by expatriate teachers, with an overall expatriate dependency of 19% as of June 1997. This is an improvement, compared to the 36% of expatriate teachers at the primary level alone in 1986. Nationalization of the teaching force has become crucial in implementing the Bhutanese curriculum. Earlier, the problem was the lack of candidates joining the teaching profession. Now there are more applicants than seats available in the two teacher training institutes. Work is under way to increase the capacities in the institutes. While expansion of the education system is a continued priority, the Government is anxious that this does not take place at the cost of the quality of education. With rapid expansion taking place at

all levels of education, the need to improve the number and quality of teachers and support services to the schools has become more critical.

159. Special emphasis is being given to in-service training and upgrading the skills of the teachers during the Eighth Plan. A regular system of workshops at three levels. The national based in-service programme (NBIP), the Dzongkhag-based in-service programme (DBIP) and the school-based in-service programme (SBIP) are being organized to benefit about 1,000 teachers annually. In addition, about 270 teachers will receive in-service training abroad, funded by UNICEF, the Swiss Development Corporation, the World Bank and the Government of Canada during the next few years.

(d) Resource gaps

160. Many of the problems faced by the education sector result from the shortage of essential resources, the primary reason being lack of sufficient funds. Apart from a nominal fee of Nu 5 per annum per student, all schooling facilities are provided free. In addition, schools collect from Nu 10 to Nu 300 per student per annum for the school development fund. As such, the recurring costs of the Education Division are very high. In addition, maintenance costs are very high due to poor construction of educational facilities in the past. Although the Government is providing support in this sector to the maximum extent possible, it is not commensurate with the growth of the education system. Hence, more international assistance is required to address the increasing needs of the education sector in Bhutan.

(e) Quality of Education

161. With the rapid expansion taking place owing to demand for additional school places, much of the efforts of the Education Division are directed at maintaining the quality of education at all levels. It is the aim of the Education Division to provide a wholesome education for the children. To achieve this end, a number of programmes have been initiated by the Curriculum and Professional Support Services (CAPSS) section of the Division. The school library development programme aims to enhance the reading abilities of the children and expand their knowledge. Mainly through international assistance, library books are supplied to the schools and teachers are being trained as librarians. The agriculture and social forestry programme promotes kitchen gardening and planting of trees in schools and raising pigs and poultry. Under the health, physical education and personal development programme, school-based activities of the health and sanitation programme are undertaken and supported and these areas are incorporated in the environmental science textbook at the lower primary level, in social studies at the upper primary level, and in science, geography and economics textbooks at the secondary level. In addition, children are encouraged to participate in a variety of games and sports as well as in music and drama. Club activities in these areas are supported through the supply of equipment and the organization of inter-school competitions. More recently, with the establishment of the Youth Guidance and Counselling Services section in the Education Division, scouting has been initiated and introduced in many schools with much support from UNICEF and the Government. The Bhutan Scouts Association has applied for and will likely soon be granted membership in the World Organization of the Scout Movement. The section has also started vigorous career counselling services both at the school as well as nationally

through training of teachers in career counselling and organization of lectures, workshops and career education exhibitions.

162. The Education Division will be facilitated by the establishment of about 40 resource centres around the country in centrally located schools during the Eighth Plan. Each centre will cover a cluster of schools to provide facilities for developing teaching/learning materials, carrying out research activities, upgrading knowledge and training. These centres will provide the much needed network to promote audiovisual learning for children, especially in remote schools. They will also facilitate the implementation and development of the distance education programme. The resource centres will act as the nerve centres for the Education Division in the implementation of its major programmes under curriculum development, monitoring and evaluation, assessment, guidance and counselling.

2. Aims of education (art. 29)

163. The goals of education in Bhutan are:

(a) To provide opportunities for developing each individual's potential so that he/she becomes a useful and productive member of the society, and at the same time enrich his/her faculties to enable him/her to lead a fulfilling life;

(b) To meet the manpower requirements of the country in both modern and traditional sectors while at the same time averting, as far as possible, the problems of educated unemployment; and

(c) To provide basic literacy skills to all in order to enhance the capacity of citizens to participate meaningfully in all national development programmes and empower them to make informed choices for themselves as well as for the nation.

164. To achieve the above goals, the basic areas of learning in the education system in Bhutan are outlined as:

1. Languages: Dzongkha and English. The aims of both Dzongkha and English- language curriculum are to develop students' competence in the appropriate and efficient use of four language skilllistening, speaking, reading and writing.

2. Mathematics: Students are to be provided with the opportunity to investigate quantitative relationships and gain the basic competence useful for daily living and problem solving. It should also establish a sound understanding of the concepts to provide a firm basis for study of mathematics at higher levels.

3. Science and Technology: Students are to gain essential knowledge and understanding of their physical environment including the workings of modern technology and people's interaction with it, through inquiry and investigation. The scientific knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that they acquire at this stage form the basis on which they can build, for those who would pursue the study of science and technology at higher levels.

4. Human Society and Environment: Students are provided with an understanding of their personal, social and environmental concerns,

linking the past, present and future both inside and outside of Bhutan. They can learn about the rich traditional heritage and explore the religious and cultural beliefs and values held by themselves and others.

5. Creative and practical arts: Students are given the opportunity to use and develop their creative talents in singing, dancing, drawing and making of crafts.

6. Health, physical education and personal development: Students are encouraged to develop active and healthy life styles. Students are provided with knowledge about their health and an understanding of their physical and social development.

7. Socially useful and productive work: Kitchen and flower gardening and social forestry form an integral part of this programme.

(Summarised from the curriculum handbook for schools, entitled "The Purpose of School Education in Bhutan")

165. All schools in Bhutan, whether government or privately run, have to follow these guidelines in the implementation of the curriculum. Private schools are provided with monitoring and evaluation support by the Education Division and are subject to inspection as and when required.

3. Leisure, recreation and cultural activities (art. 31)

166. Bhutanese families are close knit and children are the primary concern of the parents as well as grandparents. There are no restrictions made on children whatsoever where participation in recreational or cultural activities are concerned. Sometimes, the older children are required to help out in the farms, to gather wood or to look after cattle or take care of their siblings.

167. Schools and institutions in the kingdom participate in inter-school competitions in sports and games, art and drama and other areas. Most of the schools have access to a playground where the children play football, basketball and volleyball and traditional games such as archery, khuru and degо. The school routine includes periods for games and club activities. Scouting is one of the most popular activities and has now become a national programme to be introduced in all the schools. Furthermore, schools organise concerts and fairs to raise funds while giving children an opportunity to participate in such personal development activities.

168. In addition, in collaboration with organizations such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature and the World Wide Fund for Nature, nature clubs have been created, which encourages participation in debates, nature camps and essay competitions.

169. The Education Division also organizes study and cultural tours for schoolchildren within the country and abroad to enable children to experience different cultures.

170. Sports activities for youth are promoted by the Bhutan Olympic Committee while the Bhutan Amateur Athletics Federation (BAAF) explores the potentials of

children and provides them with training in Bhutan as well as abroad through regional efforts. So far over 3000 children have benefited from this programme under BAAF.

H. Special protection measures

1. Children in situations of emergency

171. While there are no specific national laws relating to children in situations of emergency, Bhutan is party to the four Geneva Conventions of 12 August,1949 for the protection of war victims, including the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, which has specific provisions for the protection of children.

172. Bhutan has not experienced any major situation of emergency as a consequence of war or natural calamities in its recent history. Funds are provided by the Government to children and families whose homes have been destroyed by fire and other accidents/calamities to help sustain them until other family members can resolve the difficulty. There also exists a Hospital Welfare Fund which often provides funds for patients who require assistance in returning home following their treatment (or treatment of their children) at the national referral hospital in Thimphu.

2. Children in conflict with the law

173. The problem of juvenile delinquency is a very recent phenomenon in Bhutan. In Bhutan, the offences committed by juveniles are mainly petty thefts and are confined to urban areas, particularly Thimphu and Phuentsholing. Presently (May 1998), there are 31 juvenile delinquents under detention in Bhutan. Though juvenile delinquency has not reached such alarming levels in Bhutan, the Royal Government recognizes its potential as a problem of the future if preventive measures are not taken in time. Hence, the Technical and Vocational Education Section and the more recently established Youth Guidance and Counselling Services (YGCS) section under the Education Division are developing and implementing programmes to address this important concern. While the Technical and Vocational Education Section confines its activities to mainly reform-oriented training programmes, the YGCS targets school-going children and youth to prevent juvenile delinquency. It may also be mentioned that the Royal Government has approved the proposal for a new Juvenile Reformation Centre at Tshimakoti which is planned to be etablished towards the end of 1998.

174. In 1993, with a view to addressing the emerging problem of juvenile delinquency in the country, a group of volunteers, under the auspices of the BhutanYouth Development Association, started a counselling programme for juvenile delinquents under detention in Thimphu. Under this programme, the volunteers visited the juvenile delinquents and directed their efforts towards imparting basic education and providing informal counselling for reformation. Such activities are encouraged and given full support by the Government.

175. In 1997, the Technical and Vocational Education Section conducted two training programmes in the field of plumbing, electrical house wiring and furniture-making for the benefit of juveniles. Such training is not conducted in isolation for the juvenile delinquents alone, but with other school children and youth.

176. Some of the important provisions of law that safeguard the best interests of children, in particular those conflict with the law are cited in the section on genuine principles.

While not specified in the law, by convention, parents or guardians of children apprehended by the police for criminal acts committed by the children are notified as soon as possible upon apprehension and are called to be present at all stages of the proceedings of a juvenile.

3. Children in situations of exploitation, including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (art. 39)

177. Child labour in the modern and industrial sectors does not exist in Bhutan.

178. In Bhutan, drug abuse is mainly a problem in urban areas which has surfaced only very recently. The extent of the use of drugs is not known although informal reports indicate an increasing trend among schoolchildren. The YGCS has responded to this growing concern by organizing workshops and lecture sessions in close consultation with the school authorities and the Health Division. In addition, drug abuse prevention education is an important theme promoted in schools through the Scouting movement. Scout leaders from all the schools are being trained to organize anti-drug campaigns and to take leading roles in their respective schools and communities in disseminating information on drug issues. The law prohibits the cultivation, production, possession, sale and purchase, transportation, storage, use, consumption, import and export of all narcotic and psychotropic substances in Bhutan.

179. Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children is uncommon in Bhutan. Kuensel has reported two to three cases of rape in recent years. In general, at present children are quite safe from these dangers in Bhutan. Sale and abduction of children is not practised in Bhutan. No instances of illicit trafficking of children for prostitution and such purposes have ever been reported in Bhutan.

4. Children belonging to a minority or an indigenous group (art. 30)

180. There are two main ethnic groups in Bhutan. The Lhosthampas, living in southern Bhutan, are Nepali immigrants while the Sharchops, living in eastern Bhutan and Ngalops, living in western and central Bhutan, are culturally interlinked and differ only in spoken language.

181. There are some minority groups in Bhutan such as the Brokpas, who live in the northern highlands and whose main occupation is yak herding and the Taba Damteps in the south-west region of the country. Brokpas living in the north-east are called Merak Sagtenpas, those living in north-central Bhutan are called Lunaps and those living in the north-west are called Laya Lingships. The Taba Damteps are more popularly known as "Doyas". Children of these minority groups are provided with free education through the establishment of schools within the community. Trained teachers are posted in these areas to ensure the quality of education since they have very little supervision from headquarters. The basic health units established in their areas provide free medical facilities.

182. These minority groups are given full support by the Government to preserve their unique customs and traditions. The Bhutanese take pride in the diversity of their culture and such minority groups are given the opportunity to promote their customs and traditions. Their songs and dances are given due recognition during national celebrations and are also taught in schools.

II. CONCLUSION

183. This report has attempted to provide information on the situation of children in Bhutan and the legislative, judicial and administrative measures in force to facilitate the implementation of the aims of the Government for children with special reference to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. One can see that there are many areas of the Convention not translated into law. This is due to the fact that problems in those areas have not emerged in Bhutan as yet. Laws are framed and adopted by the National Assembly which is comprised of the representatives of the people. Since the existing laws protect and safeguard the best interests of children, additional laws to cover all the articles of the Convention have not been proposed. As mentioned before, a few Acts have been introduced or amended to accommodate the Convention as well as to respond to emerging issues. However, in the near future, the Government foresees the need to constitute juvenile courts and enact juvenile laws to safeguard the best interests of the child.

184. The Government of Bhutan aims to provide all the facilities necessary to achieve global goals for the benefit of children through provision of free education, health and other essential social services and ensure economic prosperity and personal development of every citizen. Lack of resources is one of the main constraints faced by the Government. The Bhutanese economy has to expand to sustain all these services and other developmental activities. However, the following constraints impede the process of economic development making it slow and difficult:

Bhutan is a landlocked country, geographically isolated from other countries in the region and is 800 km away from the nearest sea port in Calcutta India. This isolation increases transportation costs of goods into and from Bhutan;

The area of arable land is limited as the terrain is extremely mountainous. This restricts the potential for increasing output from the agricultural sector, thus creating a fragile mountain economy;

The population is distributed in remote, scattered settlements making the provision of services more expensive and less cost-effective;

Although improving, there is still a shortage of human resources;

Most of the people are subsistence farmers and the level of monetization has remained low. Due to this, efforts by the Government to raise domestic revenues have been restricted and Bhutan has had to rely on external assistance for the funding of development programmes.

185. While Bhutanese children, in general, enjoy a better life than most of their counterparts in the region, as indicated in the regional meetings and ensuing reports on children, efforts have to be made to maintain the Bhutanese tradition of nurturing the child within a strong family support system. The

emphasis that is being given to preservation of tradition and culture within the overall development approach must continue. The challenge ahead is to be able to sustain the delicate balance that has thus far been maintained between progress and age-old values that inherently protect the rights and privileges of children.